

2 July 1979

Classification Review Procedure

CRP 79-32 and
CRP 79-008/OSS

GUIDELINES FOR THE REVIEW OF RECORDS FOR THE PERIOD
FROM THE END OF OSS TO THE BEGINNING OF CIA
1 October 1945 - 30 September 1947

BACKGROUND

On 20 September 1945 President Harry Truman signed an Executive Order breaking up the OSS as of 1 October 1945 and directing the Secretary of State to take the lead in developing the program for a comprehensive and coordinated foreign intelligence system. The Research and Analysis (R&A) and Presentation Branches of the OSS went intact to the State Department. The remaining activities of the OSS (mostly clandestine services) were assigned to the War Department which was to keep them separate in the Strategic Services Unit (SSU) established by the Executive Order for that purpose and to keep those activities to serve as a nucleus for a possible central intelligence service.

On 22 January 1946 President Truman issued a Presidential Directive which established the Central Intelligence Group (CIG) functioning directly under the National Intelligence Authority (NIA). The NIA consisted of representatives of the Secretaries of State, War and Navy and a personal representative of the President. The Director of CIG was appointed by the President. His duties included planning to coordinate departmental intelligence activities; recommending policies and objectives of the "national intelligence mission;" correlating and evaluating intelligence for strategic and national policy and disseminating it within the Government; performing functions related to intelligence as the President and NIA might direct; and performing services of common concern where those services could be performed more efficiently by a central organization. Significantly, the Director of CIG was not given the duty of directly collecting intelligence. The CIG was described as "a cooperative interdepartmental activity." Since the SSU had been expected only to serve an interim function, the Executive Order of 20 September 1945 directed the Secretary of War to discontinue the SSU as soon as its functions and facilities could be: 1) placed in a new central intelligence organization; 2) placed in the War Department; or 3) dropped entirely. General Magruder, chief of the SSU, was to superintend the liquidation of those SSU activities to be dropped entirely during peacetime. On 29 January 1946 the Secretary of War directed that the SSU should be liquidated by 30 June 1946. The Director of CIG was to take what records he wanted from SSU through the Secretary of War and retain operational control over them. Title to the records was to be settled later. Magruder felt that SSU plans, properties and personnel must be maintained because they were indispensable for the procurement of intelligence in peacetime. On 14 February 1946 he urged that the SSU be placed under the Director of CIG.

entire unit, an interdepartmental committee was organized under Colonel Fortier to study this question. In support for the opinion that the SSU, as was, ought not go to the CIG. The committee had heard that the bulk of intelligence information came from friendly governments; that much material came from other sources than secret collection; that personnel had not been adequately screened; and that many clandestine personnel had become exposed during WW II. The committee thought that the SSU should be reorganized and the desired portion placed under the CIG as a "going concern." The committee thought that CIG should closely coordinate clandestine operations, concentrate on the USSR and its satellites, penetrate key institutions to aid possible U.S. military operations, develop liaison with foreign intelligence agencies and develop sleeper networks in Germany and Japan while overt collection of intelligence information could remain with the other U.S. Government agencies. The committee also recognized the interrelationship between the SSU and the R&A Branch (still located in the State Department) and urged that their activities be integrated because the R&A Branch was "closely geared to the secret intelligence branches as their chief guide." The committee also felt that the Director of CIG should take authority and responsibility for liquidation of the SSU.

On 3 April 1946 the final liquidation of SSU was postponed from 30 June 1946 to 30 June 1947. Meanwhile, the Chief of SSU was directed to obey the instructions from the Director of CIG. This made it possible for Fortier, Assistant Director and Acting Chief of Operational Services of CIG, to take over such SSU assets as the Director of CIG wanted while unwanted assets would be absorbed into the War Department or abandoned. The arrangements for the transfer of SSU to the CIG through the War Department were complicated but it enabled the CIG to take legally what it wanted while Magruder, Chief of the SSU, got rid of unwanted facilities through the War Department. Although no specific legislation was taken, the passage of time and the inferential approval of the National Security Act of 1947 appears to have vested title of SSU property to the CIG.

In June 1946 General Vandenberg became the Director of CIG (replacing Admiral Souers). Vandenberg felt that the Director of CIG must be the NIA's executive officer and he immediately struck out to obtain greater authority and independence for the CIG. But his ideas met resistance from the member agencies of NIA, Vandenberg did win some points. For example, Vandenberg wanted the CIG to conduct all espionage and counter espionage for the collection of foreign intelligence abroad. This proposal was modified to allow the Director of CIG to conduct only those "organized federal" operations which were outside the U.S. and its possessions, but still left CIG with the authority to collect intelligence information. The purpose of the revision was to permit the military services to collect intelligence for departmental purposes and it was meant to protect the FBI in performing its duties within the U.S. Vandenberg then established the office of Special Operations to collect foreign intelligence. During the summer and fall of 1946, the CIG arranged to take over the personnel, undercover agents, and foreign stations of the SSU. By mid-October 1946 the liquidation of SSU was complete. (SSU as a bonafide organization never actually went out of business. The C/INS/DIO is the current chief of SSU and is authorized to conduct certain business for

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requests from EX-SSU or OSS personnel.) Field stations were notified that effective 19 October 1946 "SSU discontinues all overseas activities and the Office of Special Operations of CIC assumes responsibility for conducting espionage and counterespionage in the field for collection of foreign intelligence information required for national security."

As noted above, the CIC takeover of the SSU stretched over a period of several months in 1946. During this period the CIC took over many of the personnel, installations, facilities, and cover arrangements and units as well as administrative practices of the SSU. Personnel will find CIC, after 19 October 1946, using SSU cover unit designations and letterhead stationery from such units, making it difficult to identify CIC documents from appearance alone. It could be argued that if the letterhead is SSU then it is an SSU document. Be that as it may, for general purposes in classification review consider all records created before 19 October 1946 as SSU and all records created after that date as CIC.

GUIDELINES

For our general use in the classification review process, the date of 19 October 1946 will be considered the pivotal date marking the "end" of the SSU and the "beginning" of the CIC. Generally speaking, records dated prior to 19 October 1946 will be considered SSU documents and those created after that date will be considered CIC documents.

The methods of organization and operation used by the SSU were very similar to those developed and used by the OSS. The SSU was essentially a military unit, staffed mostly by military personnel and housed in the War Department under military command. It is therefore pertinent for us to review SSU documents under those guidelines developed for and used in the classification review of OSS records. The CIC on the other hand, very soon after its creation began to take on an independent life and although many CIC personnel continued to be military it quickly attracted more civilians and it was not under direct military command. We will, therefore, look at CIC documents as relating closely to the beginning of the CIA and will review CIC documents under those guidelines developed for and used in the classification review of CIA records. As a general rule, the OSS review team will be responsible for reviewing documents originated before 19 October 1946 and the other CRP reviewers will be responsible for those documents originated after 19 October 1946. This date is not intended to be an absolute rule; as in all review work, individual judgement must be used. For example, a document originated after 19 October 1946 might refer to the past and to activities or problems of the SSU making it in essence a more or less typical SSU document containing material relating to the SSU. Such a document should be reviewed as being essentially a SSU document and using the OSS guidelines to judge the classification action. On the other hand, a document originated before 19 October 1946 might refer to the future and to activities or problems relating to the CIC making it in essence a more or less typical CIC document. This type document should be reviewed as a CIC document using the CIA guidelines.

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